Handi-Lift Advisory Council Meeting January 19, 2011 Minutes

This meeting of the Handi-Lift Advisory Council met at the Hood Building on South President Street.

Attending this meeting were Traci Brent (JATRAN ADA Coordinator) from Jackson's Transit Services Division, Sam Tensley, General Manager of JATRAN, Dewayne Cheatham, Director of Operations of JATRAN, Karen Robinson (JATRAN) the Rev. Sam Gleese (City of Jackson ADA Coordinator), Napoleon Campbell (Vice Chair), Jason Bunch, Lee Cole, Namon Hulitt Jr., Kay Hardage, Esq., of Disability Rights Mississippi, Dr. Abron A. Haymond, and Dr. Scott M. Crawford (Chair).

- I. The meeting opened at 1:10pm. Introductions were made and the attendance list was signed.
- II. Dr. Haymond and Mr. Cheatham read the minutes from the last meeting from November, 2010. There were several revisions and corrections made but the minutes were eventually approved as amended.

III. Old Business

- a. The first item for discussion was the pending purchase of new scheduling software and computer hardware for the Handi-Lift program. Ms. Brent stated that the decision had been narrowed down to two companies, and at least one of the company representatives would come to JATRAN this week to demonstrate how the software worked. The other company representative would come no later than next week. Mr. Tensley was asked how much new scheduling software and computers might increase current Handi-Lift capacity. Mr. Tensley estimated between 35 and 40% owing to improved routing and clustering riders in fewer buses.
- b. The next item discussed was the limitations in capacity of the current Handi-Lift program. Dr. Crawford asked if the four (4) new paratransit buses were still in the budget in light of the mayor's proposed cuts to JATRAN's personnel. Mr. Tensley answered that to his knowledge, the four new buses were still budgeted, but admitted that if the proposed cuts in bus operators goes through, there would be inadequate operators to run those buses. Dr. Crawford asked when those buses might be delivered. Traci Brent said that they would take about six (6) months to be delivered after being ordered and this has yet to happen. It is not known when this order may in fact take place. Napoleon Campbell interjected that since the proposed budget and personnel cuts are "not dead" and remain as outstanding issues, many uncertainties still exist and few decisions will be made until

- JATRAN's funding is finalized. He urged committee members to show up for public comment during City Hall meetings to reinforce the importance of public transit on City Council members.
- c. Finally, the topic of the Handi-Lift Policies and Procedures Manual was raised as well as the cover letter required by the consent decree. The last meeting to discuss this issue was cancelled at Ms. Brent's request due to the proposed cuts to JATRAN, but now she asked for a date/time when this meeting might be rescheduled. It was decided that a meeting to include Lee Cole, Napoleon Campbell, and Scott Crawford (in addition to Ms. Brent and Mr. Cheatham) would convene next Tuesday, January 25th, 2011, at 9am at JATRAN's Administrative Office.

IV. New Business:

- a. Dr. Crawford brought up some confusion amongst fixed route bus operators regarding the seatbelt policy on fixed route. Dr. Crawford said that four different bus operators have insisted on using lap belts on fixed route because they thought they had to. Both Mr. Tensley and Mr. Cheatham expressed frustration because they have made the policy very clear to their operators, verbally, and in writing, that lap belts are optional in fixed route, and mandatory on paratransit. Mr. Tensley again asked for specific names so that he might clarify the policy with these particular operators.
- b. The next item was a question from Dr. Crawford regarding the number of new Handi-Lift applications being submitted to JATRAN. Karen Robinson answered that Logisticare, a Medicaid transportation broker, is submitting about 50 new applications per month, and that there are about 40-50 others from private individuals, for a total of about 90-100 new Handi-Lift applications per month. It remains dubious as to whether JATRAN can possibly meet the increasing need for paratransit in light of cuts to the Medicaid transportation program. Dr. Crawford asked if there was a specific policy about deploying ramps when someone with a walker boards or alights a bus. Mr. Tensley said he did not think so, but it was certainly in best practice to offer. He said he would talk with Mr. Cheatham about the matter and consider making this standard operating procedure. Dr. Crawford asked about kneeling buses when people using canes or others with gait impairments try to board/alight. Mr. Tensley said that this should be happening whenever anyone boards/alights the bus, but that he's finding it very difficult to get his bus operators to change their behavior: "It's hard to teach old dog new tricks."
- c. Finally, Dr. Crawford brought up the availability of customer service on Saturdays, alluding to a complaint he filed last November or December when the buses were rerouted and no one answered the customer service line to dispatch back-up transportation. Karen Robinson said that the existing customer service line is now being forwarded on Saturdays to the Handi-Lift Dispatch office so that shouldn't happen again.

Dr. Crawford brought up the need to meet next month in light of the fact that, as Mr. Campbell pointed out, much uncertainty remains about the future of JATRAN. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Hulitt recommended continuing meeting on a monthly basis to emphasize the importance of paratransit with the city. Ms. Cole suggested that every other month would be sufficient as nothing would likely happen between now and this time next month. There was a vote and it was 4 to 2 in favor of meeting in March 16th, with the provision that this decision can be reevaluated should some pressing matter arise during the interim. Dr. Crawford mentioned that meeting monthly may be resumed when the committee deems that helpful or necessary.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

These notes were written by Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D., Chairperson and approved at the March 16, 2011 meeting and approved at the March 16, 2011 meeting.